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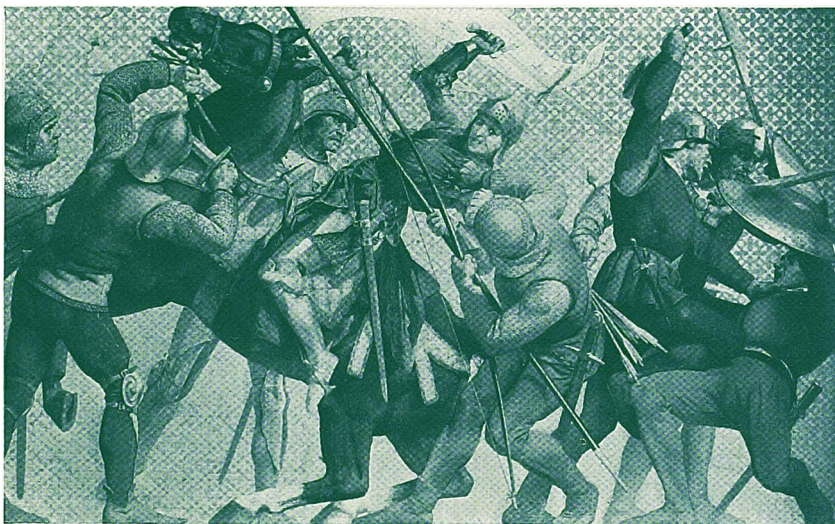
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CAPTURE OF JOAN AT COMPIEGNE
By Lenepveu

JOAN INTERPRETED BY ART

By J. W. McEACHREN



SOME eight years ago—if memory plays no trick—the Bishop of Arca expressed the devout hope that the person of Joan of Arc might be the rallying point of all Frenchmen in the near future. On the surface there have been few indications in recent years that either the hearts or the minds of Frenchmen were turning more than ordinarily toward the fair maiden of Domremy either as warrior or martyr or saint. But beneath the surface who may say what strange influences are at work in the France of to-day? There has been here and there decided reaction against the efforts of the government to divorce church and state. Not a few of the priests have seen advantage in appealing to the imagination of their people. The names of saints have been used with more than common frequency, and Saint Jeanne has not been neglected by the church of this day, no matter what may be said of the same church four or five centuries ago.

There is much in the life of Joan of Arc that appeals to the Frenchman of to-day; there is scarcely anything in her life that does not appeal, and that strongly, to the poet, the romancist, the painter and the sculptor. Brush and chisel and pen have by no means exhausted Joan of Arc as a fruitful and alluring subject for portrayal. And the very unrest now felt by the church in France is turning the volatile spirit and the sprightly imagery of the French toward Saint Joan as the pious wish of the good bishop of Arca never could have done.

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Thus a revival of Joan of Arc is indicated as one of the probabilities of a future near at hand. In fact there are already certain unmistakable signs that the incidents in the career of this remarkable maiden have awakened anew the fancy of the poet, the skill of the dramatist, and the imagination of the artist.

And what a field this subject offers, especially to the Frenchman! Joan of Arc, as a national heroine, fulfills every condition for artistic celebration. Her sex, that commands the chivalry of her countrymen; her religion, that is symbolized in the belated *amende honorable* conveyed in her canonization by the church; her physical courage and military skill, that elicit the homage of all who admire those qualities which even in a man, much less a woman, would have compelled universal admiration; and a moral power and vigor, brought out to the full in the trial before her "judges," which in the simple peasant girl may be regarded as nothing short of miraculous!

And the time in which she lived! Then the practice of art was blossoming into full flower. Events were shaping themselves and time was ripening for the invention of printing. It was the age of Chaucer and the birth of English poetry; the age of Petrarch and of Boccaccio and of Villon; the age that was to usher in all the glories of Shakespeare and Cervantes and Rabelais.

And it was an age of widespread superstition. The rule of the church was greater than the rule of kings. Rome governed the world of that day, made and unmade temporal rulers, led the people where it listed; but Rome also gave to the poets and the painters of the fifteenth century their most fruitful inspirations.

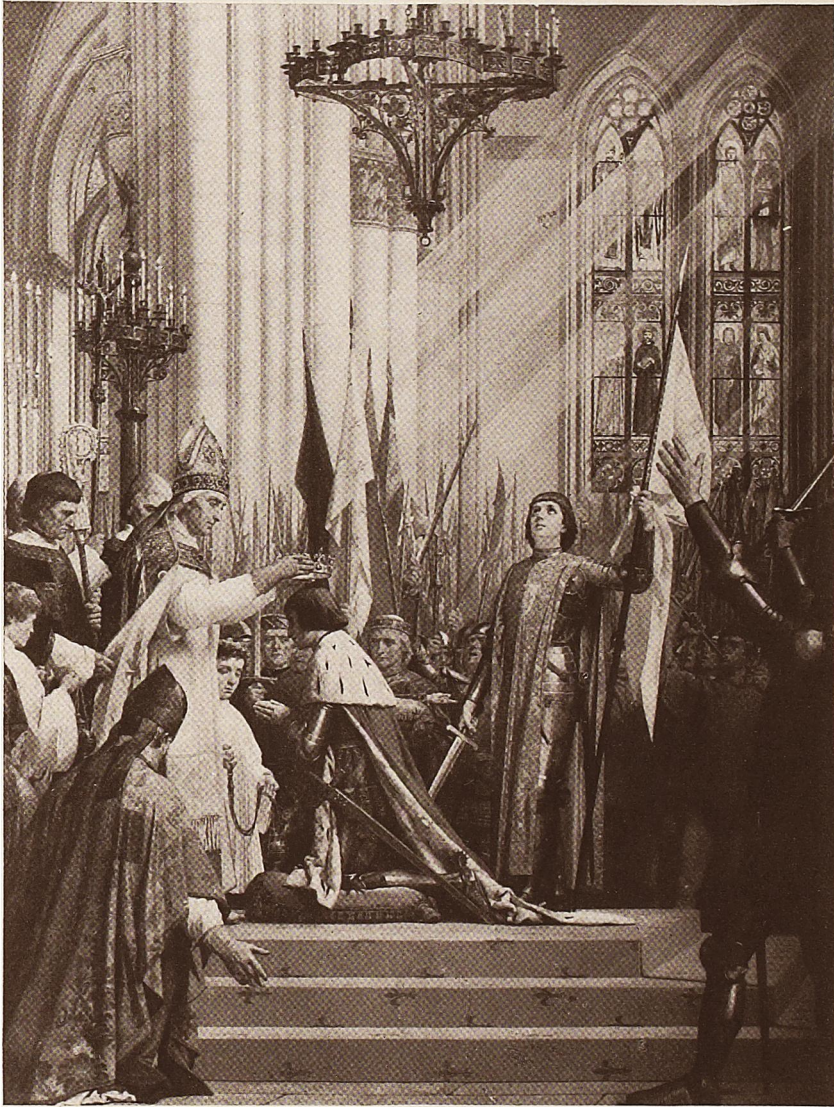
In a large measure we find that the artists of her time and the years closely following her martyrdom have made Joan of Arc not only typical of the age in which she lived, but also prophetic of centuries of development and advancement in the country she wrested from the Briton. But it is in her religious exaltation, an exaltation which inspired the simple country maid to forget her sex, to lead in the delivery of her country, to drive back the invader, that has most inspired the poets of the brush and chisel.

Probably no more notable collection of Joan of Arc in picture and sculpture has been made than that of Monseigneur Le Nordez in his "*Jeanne d'Arc: Racontée par l'Image, d'après les Sculpteurs, les Graveurs, et les Peintres.*" More than 300 figures are shown of which the vast majority deal with Joan's career, her portraits, exploits, etc.

Nearly every form of art has its example—woodcut, and illumination, sculpture, painting, enamel, glass-painting, medal drawing, lithograph—even poster—from Charles VII's "*Vigiles*" to the die of M. Oscar Roty and the pictures of M. Benjamin-Constant and Mr. George Joy. The book certainly is something of an *olla podrida*, but best fitted, perhaps, to show how differently the episodes treated have struck the mind and imagination of the various artists. And they represent the most



JOAN OF ARC DELIVERING ORLEANS
By Lenepveu



CORONATION OF CHARLES VII
By Lenepveu

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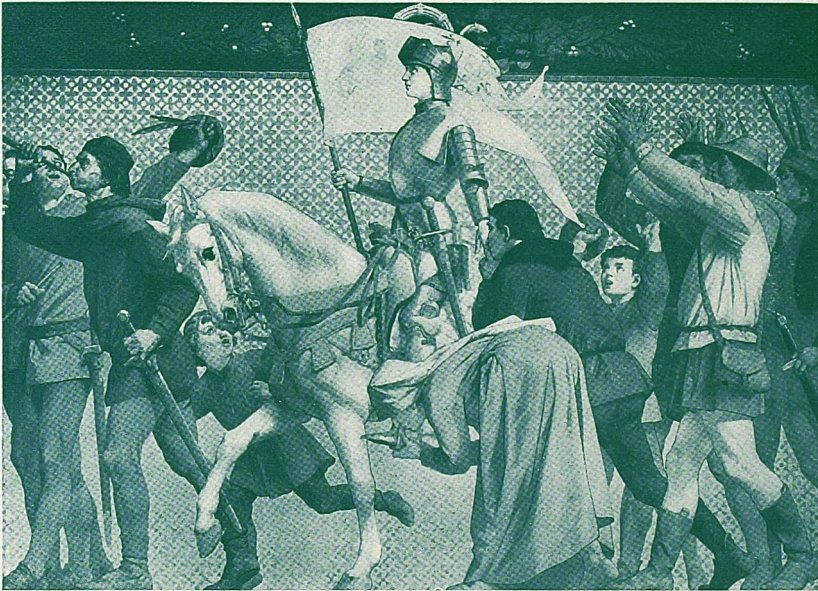
THE DEPARTURE FROM VAUCOULEURS
By Lenepveu

celebrated in the art of France from Fouquet to Fremiet and the rest of the present day.

Naturally certain of the most striking of the episodes in the career of the Maid of Orleans have been treated by various artists. These begin chronologically with the voyage to Vaucouleurs and to Chinon and Poitiers. Then follows Tours and Blois with her military establishment and reform of the army—which needed reform if ever an army did; Orleans and Rheims and her first triumphs; Saint Dennis and Compiègne, the faltering of her allies, her abandonment by fortune, her capture by the enemy; from Beaulieu to Dieppe, as the gentle prisoner is marched from place to place, a victim of doubt and of anguish and soon to be so shamefully betrayed by those of her own country; finally Rouen with her imprisonment, her mock trial, mental tortures and final martyrdom. All these have been portrayed with reasonable fidelity to history, but at the same time with a wealth of imaginery and romance that make the depicted scenes forever noteworthy in the world of art.

In the mural paintings by Lenepveu, in the Pantheon one may read in the most graphic form the whole history of this remarkable maiden. We see her first standing awe-struck as she listens to the "voices" bidding her to "be good and to go to church often." The artist seems to have caught his inspiration at the moment when Saint Michael is handing Jenne the flaming sword and whispering in her ear: "Jennie, you are summoned to lead a different life and to do marvelous things, for it

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JEANNE AND PEOPLE OF ORLEANS

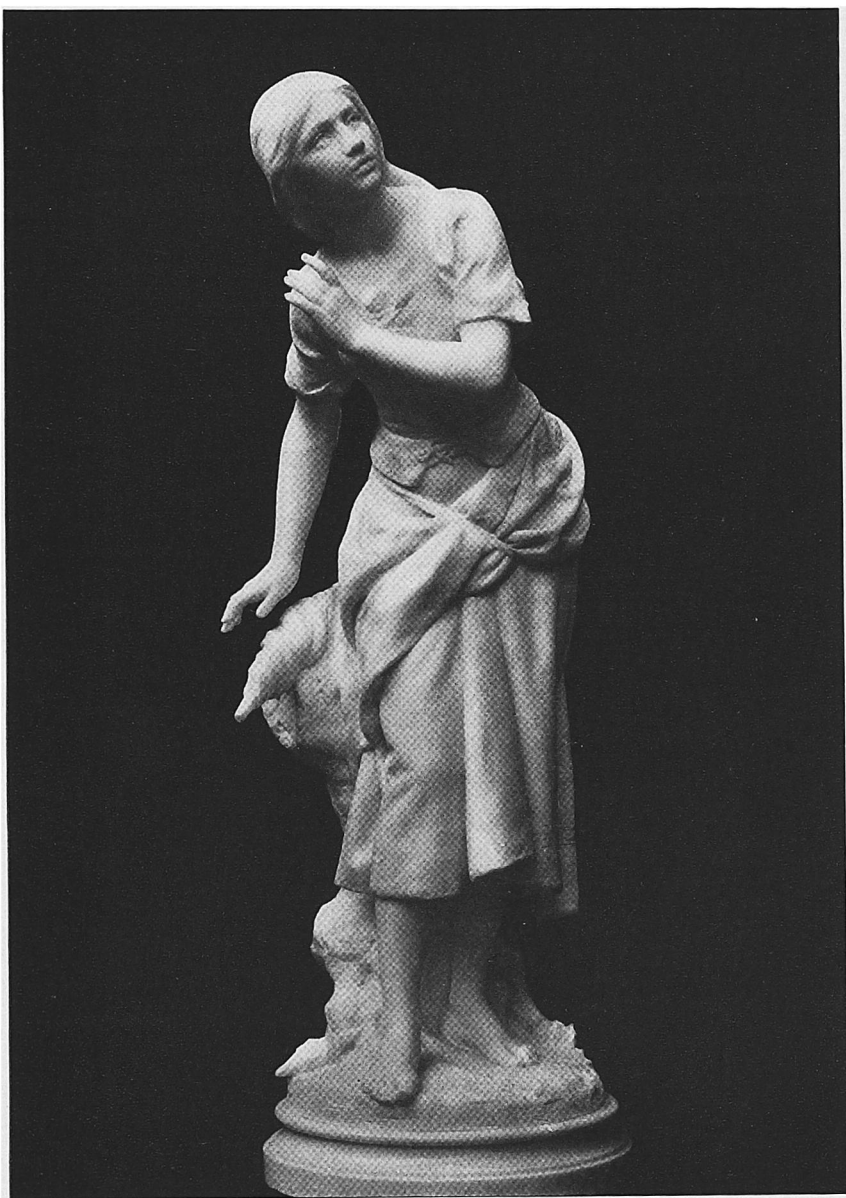
By Lenepveu

is you whom the King of Heaven has chosen to restore happiness to France and to aid King Charles. Put on a man's clothes, arm yourself; you shall be the chief in war and all shall be done according to your advice."

Antonin Mercie treats the same episode in marble. But on the national monument at Domremy the figure behind Jeanne is representative of France and the maiden has taken not a symbolic, but a real sword, the exalted expression on her face telling prophetically all that she soon is to be called upon to pass through. In passing it may be noted here that Mathurin Moreau in his figure of Jeanne "Hearing the Voices" gives still another treatment of this same incident.

To return to the Pantheon and Lenepveu: "The Departure from Vaucouleurs" depicts Joan as no longer a maid in appearance, and even in her face there is traceable a certain sternness, a fixedness of purpose, indicating how real to her have been the visions, how plain and imperative the voices. The contrast between this boyish figure and the rough soldiers she is so soon to lead in battle, the simple action of girding on the sword, prepare the spectator for incidents and contrasts still more thrilling.

And they are quickly found in the next picture, "Joan of Arc Delivering Orleans." Here is action of the most valorous sort. Here we find the maiden in very truth the mailed soldier and inspiring leader. Fearless she stands at the head of her troops, dauntless in the face of the English and their allies, urging on her followers, inspiring them by word



HEARING THE VOICES
By Mathurin Moreau

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and by example, shaming them, perhaps, by her sex, till victory crowns their efforts.

And the triumph is fittingly depicted in "Jeanne and the People of Orleans," who crowd about her horse, kiss her hands and feet and enthusiastically proclaim her their deliverer and the deliverer of their beloved France.

Then comes the most magnificent of these mural depictions, "The Coronation of Charles VII." Note the commanding figure of Joan as she stands back of the kneeling figure of one of the weakest and most vacillating men who ever wore kingly robes. She still carries the drawn sword that has brought such signal triumph, still holds aloft the flag for which she has fought. But her face is turned upward as though she were seeking still from the "voices" direction for her further guidance and thanking alone her unseen mentors for her successes.

From the coronation with all its churchly and regal splendor and color to Compiègne is but a step for the artist, but the turning of a head for the spectator; yet that step and that turning mark the quickness of change in the French public of that day, the turning point in the career of Joan of Arc.

Battling with all the strength she commands, and with the skill learned in camp and on the battle field, Joan at last falls into the hands of her enemies. She is now a prisoner of war and the cloud that at last is to fall all about her has begun to lower.

And here one pauses while the historic shame of France passes in mental array. There is little in the imaginary picture to arouse respect either for the people or the times that could permit the shameful tragedy which closed the career of the Maid of Orleans.

All that was least to be admired in the early fifteenth century seems to have conspired to do this deed for which France has blushed for five hundred years and for which even the church has made such tardy amends—if canonization can be called amends for torture of both mind and body and for the basest sort of treachery.

Blind, mediæval religious belief and superstition took the place of enthusiastic support and unquestioning obedience. Nothing could be more shameful than the intrigues of the false Bishops Cauchon de Beauvais and Regnault de Chartes. Recall also the rapidly following incidents: The treachery of the Governor of Soissons; the trembling fear, real or assured, of Guillaume de Plavy; the falseness of Guillaume de Berger, Soiseleur, and the rest; the malignancy of the vicar general of the inquisition and of the University of Paris; the unblushing avarice of Jean de Luxembourg and the Duc de Bourgogne, who sold their victim for 10,000 golden francs; and, basest of all, the indifference of the ungrateful king, Charles VII, who did not choose to outbid the foreigner to save his savior.

These things may not all be recalled in what the artist has depicted of Joan of Arc, but one cannot view the work of the long line of artists

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who have found in Joan a fruitful theme for their brushes and chisels without having all of her life pass before the mind's eye in panorama.

And by contrast no figure stands out either from the canvas or from the imagination more deserving of condemnation than that of the cowardly monarch who, the church still has the effrontery to tell us, Joan of Arc was especially inspired to assist to the throne of France!

Charles was the tool not only of his courtiers, but of the priests. Even when Joan went to him and told of the vision she had seen, related the message that had been given to her, Charles commanded that she be subjected to an examination by the church. From this she emerged in triumph, and thereupon the Dauphin decided to employ her. But after his coronation he and her fortune, and apparently the "voices," deserted her.

One looks in vain over the many paintings and figures in bronze and marble depicting Joan of Arc for some delineation of face and figure that might give an idea of what *La Pucelle* actually looked like. Even such painters as Lenepveu do not appear to have carried through their series a distinctive face and expression.

In the equestrian statue by Paul Dubois she is a girl in her late teens, fairly sturdy of figure, if one may judge through armor and the swing of her sword arm, but markedly delicate of face.

On the other hand, the painting of "Jeanne d'Arc" in the Louvre, by Dominique Ingres, presents a maiden of almost heroic physique, a face of rare attractiveness and strength, reminding one of some of the better known Madonnas. This painting is the central feature of the artist's interpretation of Joan at the coronation of the Dauphin.

Still while we may not build from the works of art a physical Joan we have little difficulty in coming at a reasonably correct estimate of Joan as idealized by both artist and poet. And this idealization represents both the best and the worst of the age in which she lived. We have the France that could produce such a character, the France that could desert her, the France that could sell her for gold. And we have the England that could buy her, that could subject her to nameless tortures, that could cause her to be burned at the stake as a sorceress.

And while not presuming to pass judgment as we glance at the closing scenes of Joan's life so graphically depicted on a hundred canvases, we cannot avoid asking, Which nation was the more to be blamed, the one who sold Joan of Arc, or the one who bought and burned her? France has tried to clear its skirts of the odium that has clung to them for centuries, but has only partially succeeded. Nearly twenty years after Joan was burned at the stake, her family, through the influence of King Charles, obtained a revision of her trial, and a few years later she was formally announced to have been innocent!

Innocent of what? Of wearing men's clothes and of cutting off her hair, for these were the main charges against her before the inquisition. And it was not until a few years ago—four to be exact—that the church

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in an endeavor to square itself for the base part it had played in her trial and condemnation, piously came to the conclusion that she might be regarded as "venerable" and well on the way to canonization.

Joan of Arc in art is inseparably intertwined with Joan of Arc in letters. One may get some idea of the maiden and her times from the pictures and sculptures; but rightly to understand her and her times one also must know her as the poet and the romancist have depicted her.

The memory of the maid of Orleans during the centuries succeeding the Hundred Years' War never enjoyed that general reverence among the French people which her services to her country would seem to have merited. Voltaire's "*La Pucelle*" expresses the views of the eighteenth-century philosophers regarding the maid.

But in the nineteenth century her fame underwent rehabilitation. In 1875 the question of her canonization came up before the Roman Curia, and in 1902 she had passed through the first stage of the process, and had been declared "venerable."

In literature as in art the character of Joan of Arc has been variously treated. Shakespeare's "*Henry VI*" reflects the contemporary English opinion, which regarded Joan as a sorceress in league with the devil. In Schiller's beautiful "*Jungfrau von Orleans*" she is depicted, on the contrary, as a virgin mystic, who in fulfillment of her heaven-appointed mission, spurns all earthly love and dies in the moment of victory with the banner of the Christ child in her arms.

With such variety of views in letters, it is not to be wondered at that there is almost an equally great variety in the interpretations of the painters. Yet through all these various depictions, both by pen and brush, there runs the story that never has grown old, the story of an inspiration, of a lofty and pure purpose, of an exalted ambition, the story of the gentle maiden who loved her country and died for it, and about whose person well may rally, as the Bishop of Arca has hoped, the chivalry and the idealism of a better France than that which *La Pucelle* wrested from the English as she followed the never-silent "voices" and saw the never-absent vision of her guardian angels, Saint Catherine, Saint Margaret and the war-like Saint Michael.

